■16 HEADPHONE ACTOR III

HELP US...

...HELP US...!

SOME-BODY...

GARA (SLIDE)

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

16 >> HEADPHONE ACTOR III

GYU (CLENCH)

DO...

...DO YOU THINK HARUKA WILL WAKE UP?

PATA

PATA (TPP)

PATA

BIKU (SHUDDER)

.....

SENSEI...

WELL, SURE!

NI GRIND

IS HE...?

HARUKA WAS SUFFERING BY HIMSELF, AND I HAD NO IDEA...

PON (PAT)

PON

HE'S MADE IT THIS FAR. I'M SURE HE'LL BE FINE.

.....

IS HE GONNA GET BETTER?

MAYBE HARUKA WAS TRYING TO GET MY HELP BACK THERE...

ALL I CARED ABOUT WAS GETTING ATTENTION...

KATA (SHIVER)

KATA

AND LOOK AT ME...

LIKE, "I'M GLAD YOU'RE OKAY" OR WHATEVER?

WHAT COULD SOMEONE AS STUPID AS ME POSSIBLY SAY TO HARUKA WHEN HE WAKES UP?

GYU (CLENCH)

ACTING ALL NICE AND PROPER..!

AND NOW, I'M SITTING HERE, PRETENDING THAT-I GIVE A CRAP ABOUT HIM...

...SO SELFISH.

I WAS SO POWER-LESS...

IF SENSEI HADN'T COME FOR ME, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO ANYTHING.

—NO.

I HAVE NO RIGHT TO SIT NEXT TO HARUKA.

NO RIGHT TO WORRY ABOUT HIM...

SO...

...HOW'D IT GO?

GAAA (WHRRR)

OH!

...I SEE.

WELL, ALL RIGHT... THANK YOU FOR EVERY-THING.

.....

WE SHOULD STAY HERE UNTIL HARUKA'S FAMILY COMES BY.

HE MIGHT WAKE UP WHILE WE'RE WAITING, SO...

WHEW...

.....

HE'S ALIVE...

KURU CTURN

HE'S STILL ASLEEP...

...BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THEY MANAGED TO SAVE HIS LIFE.

...HOW WILL HE ACT ONCE HE REALIZES WHAT AN ASS I'VE BEEN TO HIM?

WHEN HE WAKES UP...

HARUKA...

HE MIGHT NOT EVEN WANT TO SEE ME AGAIN...

SENSEI...

AH!

H-HEY...

...BE CAREFUL, OKAY...?

FURA (STAGGER)

I'LL BE FINE...

YOU GONNA BE OKAY BY YOURSELF THOUGH?

...I BETTER GO GET HARUKA'S THINGS...

HMM?

OH YEAH, I GUESS WE LEFT HIS WALLET AND PHONE BACK THERE, HUH...?

JUST BE SURE...

...YOU STAY NEARBY FOR HARUKA, OKAY?

YOU KNOW, IN CASE HE WAKES UP AND STUFF.

SIGN: VISITING HOURS

SU (FWP)

...IT'S ALREADY BEEN ALMOST A YEAR SINCE THAT CRAZY SCHOOL FESTIVAL...

...WHEN ALL THOSE DOZENS OF GAMERS CROWDED OUT IN THE HALLWAY.

IT'S FUNNY TO THINK...

BOY, WHAT AN ORDEAL THAT TURNED OUT TO BE...

...NOT TO MENTION THE FIRST TIME I HAD A CHANCE TO MAKE A FEMALE FRIEND.

IT WAS THE DAY HARUKA FIRST GOT INTO ONLINE GAMING TOO...

A LOT OF THINGS GOT KICKED OFF THAT DAY.

OH! HEY, AYANO-CHAN.

GOOD TO SEE YOU.

HOW'VE YOU BEEN?

HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A WHILE.

...ARE YOU IN SUMMER SCHOOL, AYANO-CHAN?

GIKUN CFLINCHD

#@%&!

OH...

BUT WHAT'RE YOU STILL DOING IN SCHOOL?

WELL ...

HEH HEH HEH...

BUT... OH RIGHT!

I THINK MY DAD SAID THAT YOU AND HARUKA-SAN ARE IN SUMMER SCHOOL TOO, RIGHT?

BIKU CTWITCHD

!!!

UH...

AREN'T YOU JUST A FIRST-YEAR STU-DENT?

WELL, YEAH...

BUT MY GRADES ARE ALREADY PRETTY DIRE, SO...

BY SOME STROKE OF LUCK, THE PAIR THAT VISITED OUR BOOTH THAT DAY GOT INTO THIS HIGH SCHOOL.

I MADE FRIENDS WITH AYANO-CHAN, THE GIRL, PRETTY SOON AFTERWARD.

NOT LIKE WE WANT TO BE HERE.

YEAH, UH, BETTER NOT DWELL ON IT TOO MUCH, OKAY?

OH, BY THE WAY...

...IS THAT GUY NOT HERE TODAY?

YOU MEAN SHIN-TARO?

...I NEVER WOULD'VE GUESSED SHE'S THE DAUGHTER OF THAT FREAK...

WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT ...?

AND WHY IS SENSEI BLABBING ABOUT ME TO HER?

STILL, THOUGH ...

?

SHE'S SO EASY TO READ SOME-TIMES...

OH...

YEAH, HE IS PRETTY SMART, ISN'T HE?

PFFT!

HEE HEE HEE...

NIKO (SMILE)

NIKO

NIKO

NO WAY! HE'S WAAAY TOO SMART TO BE LANDING HIMSELF IN SUMMER SCHOOL...

.....

HE'S REALLY A GOOD GUY, ONCE YOU START TALKING TO HIM.

HE'S JUST KIND OF SHY, IS ALL.

NIKO (BEAM)

THAT MUST MAKE IT ALL THE TOUGHER FOR YOU, AYANO-CHAN...

...HAVING TO DEAL WITH THAT SELFISH CREEP ALL THE TIME.

HUH?

OHHH, HE'S NOT LIKE THAT.

NAH...

REALLY? HUH...

HE MUST BE HAPPY HAVING A FRIEND LIKE YOU AT HIS SIDE EVERY DAY, HUH?

I WOULDN'T BE ANY GOOD FOR HIM.

OH!

HA HA...

HANG ON A SEC...

THERE'S NO WAY ANYONE IN THE WORLD'S MORE SELF-ABSORBED THAN HIM!

DID I SAY SOME-THING I SHOULDN'T HAVE?

UM...

HE NEEDS SOMEONE MORE SELF-ABSORBED THAN HIM.

SOMEONE WITH ENOUGH ENERGY TO PULL HIM TOWARD HER.

YOU KNOW... SHINTARO, HE...

THAT'S KIND OF... ME, ISN'T IT?

HE'S SUPER HEAD-STRONG...

HE ONLY THINKS ABOUT HIMSELF...

HE'S FRUSTRAT-INGLY ELUSIVE...

HE NEVER SAYS WHAT HE REALLY THINKS ABOUT PEOPLE—

...UM, HANG ON A SECOND.

DID YOU SAY SOME-THING?

UH— N-NO, NOTHING!

JUST THINKING OUT LOUD!

HUH?

HA HA...

OH, NO WAY...

FURU (SHAKE)

FURU

HARUKA HAD AN EPISODE TODAY.

SENSEI'S AT THE HOSPITAL RIGHT NOW...

...BUT I HAVE TO GO GET HIS STUFF FROM THE CLASS-ROOM...

BUT ANYWAY, SORRY TO HOLD YOU UP, AYANO-CHAN.

OH NO, NOT AT ALL.

HOW ABOUT WE GO HOME TOGETHER, TAKANE-SAN?

OH, UH...

I KINDA CAN'T.

OH NO...

IS HARUKA-SAN DOING ALL RIGHT...?

UH-HUH!

PEKO (BOW)

I'M REALLY SORRY!

I DIDN'T MEAN TO DELAY YOU LIKE THIS...

OH NO!

NO PROB-LEM!

PEKO

HE ISN'T AWAKE YET, BUT THEY SAID HIS LIFE ISN'T IN DANGER OR ANYTHING.

THAT, AND SENSEI'S THERE FOR HIM TOO, SO WE'RE ALL GOOD.

BESIDES...

...I'D JUST BE IN THE WAY OVER THERE ANYWAY...

TAKANE-SAN...

I MEAN, JUST LOOK AT YOU TWO, YOU KNOW?

YEAH...

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

I MEAN...

...HARUKA-SAN WOULD NEVER THINK YOU'RE IN THE WAY OR ANYTHING, RIGHT?

I MEAN, I ALMOST WISH...

...I COULD TAKE HIS STUFF TO THE HOSPITAL AND JUST HEAD HOME...

AH!

BUT...I DUNNO.

I'D JUST FEEL WEIRD, BEING NEAR HIM RIGHT NOW.

TAKANE-SAN...

...I THINK YOU'RE BEING FAR TOO DIS-HONEST WITH YOURSELF.

I KNOW I DON'T HAVE ALL THE FACTS HERE...

THEN YOU SHOULD KNOW FULL WELL WHAT YOUR HEART IS REALLY TELLING YOU TO DO.

...BUT YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT HARUKA-SAN, RIGHT?

WELL, YEAH...

...BECAUSE YOU'RE SCARED TO TELL HIM, AREN'T YOU?

BUT YOU'RE PINNING THE BLAME ON HARUKA INSTEAD...

...THERE ARE TIMES...

...YOU WANT TO TELL SOMEONE SOMETHING, BUT YOU WIND UP BEING TOO LATE.

AND ALSO...

N-NO, I...

YES. YES, YOU ARE.

YOU NEED TO SEE HARUKA AND TELL HIM HOW YOU HONESTLY FEEL.

THAT'S NOT GONNA HAPPEN IF YOU DO IT RIGHT NOW.

SO...

...TRY TO DRUM UP A LITTLE COURAGE, OKAY?

AYANO-CHAN...

AND LOOK, IF HE BRUSHES YOU OFF, I'VE GOT A SHOULDER YOU CAN CRY ON, YOU KNOW?

BO (BLUSH)

WAIT!

I...I'M REALLY NOT...

TA

TA

TA

TA

TA

I...

I...

TA (TMP)

ANYWAY, I'D BETTER GET GOING NOW.

—HOW I HON-ESTLY FEEL.

OOF...

MAN, SHE REALLY TOLD ME OFF...

BUT THAT ISN'T EVEN THE REAL PROBLEM.

I WANT TO APOLOGIZE FOR ACTING SO SELFISH AROUND HIM.

I'VE GROWN SO ACCUSTOMED TO TRYING TO COVER THINGS UP...

...I HAVE TROUBLE FIGURING OUT EXACTLY WHAT I FEEL.

THAT'S WHY I PULLED THAT STUPID STUNT A LITTLE WHILE AGO.

BUT...

...THIS IS TOO DIFFICULT OF A CHALLENGE FOR ME.

IT'D BE FINE BY ME IF THINGS WENT BACK TO HOW THEY WERE BEFORE...

...THE SAME CLASS-ROOM, THE SAME DAY IN, DAY OUT ROUTINE.

SIGN: SCIENCE STORAGE

理科準備室

IF NOTHING HAD TO CHANGE...

GARA (SLIDE)

ガラ

AH...

OH!

MORNING, TAKANE!

HARUKA ISN'T HERE.

HARU...

...KA...

KUN (THUMP)

MAYBE HARUKA...

DOKUN (BADUM)

DOKUN

...WON'T MAKE IT HERE EVER AGAIN...

DOKUN

DOKUN...

BA (ZWIP)

NOW I FINALLY UNDER-STAND...

...WHAT I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR.

GARA (SLIDE)

ALL THIS TIME...

...THE THING I WANTED TO TELL HIM...

THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE.

I GOTTA GET TO HIS ROOM.

AND WHEN HARUKA WAKES UP...

...I'LL TELL HIM.

"SORRY ABOUT BEFORE"?

NO.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I NEED TO SAY THE MOST.

THE THING I'VE GOT TO SAY TO HIM RIGHT NOW IS...

FU (FLIKR)

KURA
(REEL)

DO (WHUD)

HUH?

I CAN BARELY BREATHE.

AGH...

NGH... AH...!!?

NOT NOW, OF ALL TIMES...!

HFF...

NO! COME ON, MOVE!

HFF...

NOW I'M HAVING AN ATTACK TOO...!?

NO...

WHY IS HE HERE?

HUH...?

ZA (SKSH)

NO...I'M BLACKING OUT...

I HAVE TO TELL HIM RIGHT NOW!

HFF...

I HAVE TO TELL HIM.

...YOU WANT TO TELL SOMEONE SOMETHING, BUT YOU WIND UP BEING TOO LATE.

THERE ARE TIMES...

I'M SUCH AN IDIOT...

I HAD THE SIMPLEST THING TO TELL HIM AND I TOOK TOO MUCH TIME FOR IT.

—HARUKA,
I LOVE YOU.

I FINALLY FIGURED IT OUT...

I THOUGHT ...

...I COULD FINALLY SAY IT TO HIM...

I GUESS... IT DIDN'T WORK OUT AFTER ALL.

...IT'S THAT HE WASN'T HERE.

IT WASN'T THAT SOME-THING WAS MISSING...

THIS WAS THE PLACE...

I WISH WE COULD JUST DO AWAY WITH THIS WHOLE WORLD...!

...THE ONLY PLACE WE WOULD'VE BEEN ABLE TO TELL HIM...!

...I FINALLY REALIZED WHAT MY TRUE FEELINGS ARE.

MAYBE I DIDN'T MAKE IT IN TIME, BUT RIGHT AT THE VERY END...

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY THAT.

SORRY...
TAKANE.

KAGEROU DAZE